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NEW AREAS OF SOCIAL WORK FOR THE SUB-PROFESSIONAL.

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THE NEED FOR, AND TRAINING REQUIRED OF, SUB-PROFESSIONALS IN SOCIAL WORK IS EXPLORED. THERE ARE NOT AS MANY PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORKERS AS ARE NEEDED. OVERTRAINING FOR CERTAIN TASKS AND DYSFUNCTIONAL EDUCATION WOULD RESULT IF ALL PART-TIME AND FULL-TIME VOLUNTEERS WERE REPLACED BY PROFESSIONALS. AT PRESENT, THE NEED FOR MANPOWER IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES IS BEING MET, IN PART, BY SOME FORM OF UNDERGRADUATE SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION. SOME OF THESE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS, IN PARTICULAR, THOSE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON, PURDUE, AND THOSE SPONSORED BY THE CRUSADE FOR POVERTY, AND THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT FOUNDATION ARE DISCUSSED. ALTHOUGH UNIVERSITY BASED PROGRAMS ARE DESIRABLE, A COMPLETE OVERHAUL OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION WOULD BE REQUIRED. STANDARDS WOULD NOT BE LOWERED, BUT DIFFERENTIATION AND CLARITY OF OBJECTIVES WOULD RESULT. THERE ARE MANY SERVICES WHICH NEED NOT BE RENDERED BY PEOPLE POSSESSING GRADUATE SOCIAL WORK DEGREES. THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THE VISTA PROGRAM ARE ALSO DISCUSSED. A NEED TO TRAIN GRADUATE STUDENTS FOR SUPERVISION AND TO TRAIN SUB-PROFESSIONALS HAS DEVELOPED. IMPRESSIVE DATA HAS BEEN OBTAINED ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF VISTA VOLUNTEERS. THIS NEW SUB-PROFESSIONAL'S CONTRIBUTION MUST BE RECOGNIZED AND UTILIZED. THIS PAPER WAS DELIVERED AT THE COUNCIL OF SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION ANNUAL MEETING (15TH), SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, JANUARY 24-27, 1967. (SK)

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NEW AREAS OF SOCIAL WORK FOR THE SUB-PROFESSIONAL*

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I have long argued that it is fitting for social workers to be subjective and that this is not a violation of the scientific method as long as the subjectivity is clearly identified. I wish at the onset to state the direction of my bias when it comes to a consideration of current manpower needs and the role of persons who, for one reason or another, have not obtained the Master's Degree in Social Work and are not members of the Academy of Certified Social Workers.

My bias is that the helping professions cannot retreat from the challenge of need. Social work educators, as well as medical and nursing educators among others, must concern themselves with the ability of their educational system to provide sufficient manpower to meet the real needs of the society they claim to serve. A profession that does not develop the means to cope with the totality of needs within the area for which it claims a certain degree of jurisdiction is actually abbrogating its responsibility.

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The issue, as I see it, is not standards, but rather the differential application of standards to the varied situations which confront our profession. The question becomes personal in terms of the ability of those of us who have a special responsibility in education for social work practice to innovate and to discover new ways of providing training for service at different specified levels. Writing of the health field, Eli Ginzberg said:

> "The most serious barrier to effective manpower utilization in the health field that I see is the fact that each group is not strong enough to fight successfully against the group which is higher on the ladder and which spends most of its energy preventing those below from moving up. The struggle for social prestige and market power between physicians and nurses, and the nurses and the technicians, the technicians and the practical nurses or auxiliary nurses, etc., makes any rational, long-term policy for manpower utilization so difficult to realize. People are motivated to work by the possibility of advancement, of growth, of development, of progress. And until very recently, a nurse who had just received her diploma often received the same pay as a nurse who had had 40 years of experience. I know of no barrier more important to the sensible development of the health service field than this confrontation of professional and sub-professional groups, fighting it out with each other, for the dollar in the first instance and, secondly, for the prestige that follows the dollar."[1]

I will not try to present the statistics of the needs of manpower in our burgeoning field of practice. You have had these figures drummed into you ad nauseatum. Suffice it to say that no matter what phenomenal increase is achieved in graduate education facilities, it will barely scratch the surface of need.

But even this is not the central issue. If it were possible to employ, for every social work position, someone who had earned the M.S.W. degree, this would have the most dubious consequences. Today's educators need to recognize the dangers that

accompany over-training for certain tasks or dysfunctional education. I also believe that social work needs to nurture the contribution that volunteers make to its mission and I think a great deal would be lost to our profession and to society if all part-time and full-time volunteers were replaced by professionals. When I argued this in the 1950s, there were many who scoffed.[2/] Today, we have the experience of several years of the Peace Corps and VISTA to demonstrate the validity of this view. At the highest circles of Government, policy makers are giving the most serious consideration to the establishment of a National Service Corps, both as an alternative to the draft and as a way of furthering the concept of voluntarism, which is one of the distinguishing traits of our American community. I hope to return to this theme in a second part of this paper.

Because the leadership of the profession thus far has devoted most of its attention and efforts to the development of professional graduate education, (and indeed to advanced professional education), all sorts of new and largely unrecognized efforts have taken place to meet the overwhelming need of the social services for manpower. As Sherman Merle has already indicated, the leadership of the Council on Social Work Education was astonished at the number of students who are today enrolled in some form of undergraduate social work education. We know very little about the developments in the undergraduate field and many of us erroneously have tended to dismiss this subject as of no great importance. We have tried to make what I believe to be a false dichotomy between undergraduate liberal education and professional graduate education.

In an important seminal paper published by the Ford Foundation, Marvin Feldman suggests that:

> ". . . vocational education is not a separate discipline and cannot be treated in the same way we approach mathematics, English, or the physical sciences. It is, rather, an approach to the disciplines and the learning process which, properly used, could reconstruct the American educational system for greater relevance of general education and a renascence of liberal-arts studies."[3]

It may well be that this strong commitment to separation between vocational education and liberal arts education, which is stressed in so much of our literature, ought to be re-examined. Feldman suggests that:

> "The intertwining of liberal and vocational elements in an educational program seeking to expand opportunity for a major proportion of our population is both a necessity and a real possibility. In pursuing this purpose, the two approaches need to be integrated throughout the entire educational experience. The current tendency to give a student initial general education, then specialization, is inappropriate on pedagogical grounds, and is at the root of the major problems in curriculum development. Nor does it fit an educational philosophy which holds that culture and vocation cannot be separated."[4]

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The growth in the undergraduate social welfare or social work curriculum is only one of the ways in which various systems have reacted to the urgent needs.

The University of Oregon is about to establish a new school, known as the School of Community Service and Public Affairs. Its goal will be to help prepare men and women for careers and voluntary activities in the broad and rapidly-expanding areas of community services and public affairs. In addition to undertaking

research and expanding the role of the university in the community, the School will be concerned with the education of personnel for a wide variety of professional occupations, ranging from City Managers to "new and as yet not well defined activities such as may be found in many areas of social agency work."[5] This new School, which will emphasize a multi-disciplinary approach, will have its own dean and will be administratively the co-equal of existing professional schools.

President Fleming has given the highest priority to this development and strong financial support for this endeavor seems assured. Let me emphasize that this will be a program operated almost entirely at the undergraduate level.

With the help of an NIMH grant, Purdue University at Fort Wayne is establishing a program leading to a degree of Associate in Applied Science which may be completed in two years of undergraduate work. While the announcement indicates that graduates will assist mental health professionals in work with emotionally disturbed and mentally retarded patients, the models for practice that are presented include:

"1. Case aide--works in clinic or agency, is first contact for clients. (Some professionals strongly believe that the intake worker needs the most skill and ability.)

2. Ward group worker--works directly with patients in a mental hospital.

3. Teaching assistant--assists teacher in special education classes.[6]

The courses include group dynamics, psychology, and sociology. The program offers supervised work experiences and familiarization and experience with a variety of therapeutic approaches.[7/]

To move to another example, the Crusade for Poverty--financed largely from funds provided by foundations and labor unions--is establishing several centers for the training of community development specialists and social action personnel with a rigorous program of courses, seminars, and field practice. Participation in this training will last two years or more and was described to me by the Director of the Crusade for Poverty as a highly intensive and exacting program.

The Eleanor Roosevelt Foundation is now in its third year of sponsoring a large number of internships in intergroup relations. Participants are given a relatively sizable stipend and are assigned to work for a period of a year in intergroup agencies in preparation for assuming professional responsibilities for guiding the work of human relations commissions and similar bodies.

This group is already familiar with the proposed levels of practice within the public welfare field and many of the activities being undertaken under the aegis of the Office of Economic Opportunity to train sub-professionals to be neighborhood counsellors, social action specialists, brokers for social service, etc.

This list could be extended greatly. Some of the current attempts are doomed to failure. In some, the financial investment in

a program of training with no educational credentials is more expensive than the support of students through a program within a university, which would then provide the individual with a degree or academic certificate. I do not believe that the marks of educational achievements will be less valued in decades to come and I would submit as a general proposition that educational programs within universities and colleges are far preferable to either in-service training or non-university based education. The receipt of a degree from an accredited institution, regardless of the level achieved, increases the mobility of the individual. It has not been demonstrated that this is true of other forms of education and training.

The manifest need today is to begin to integrate all of these diverse approaches to meeting the manpower needs and to do so in such a way that it provides individuals with successive steps. This calls for no less than a complete overhaul of social work education, for much which we consider to be graduate education consists of undergraduate content designed to make up for the lack of a social science background among those accepted in graduate schools of social work. Our present graduate program in social work education would be far sounder if we could agree on a prerequisite foundation knowledge to be obtained at the undergraduate level. But the issue goes deeper.

A couple of years ago, a group of us serving on the Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Education spent a day attempting to deal conceptually with the distinction between professional and

graduate education. Rather than react to the term "professional" as a status or prestige word, our group attempted to define what constitutes the elements of professional practice and then determine at which level in the development and education of an individual could such an expectation be made. One could call this exercise "an investigation of the reality of the emperor's clothing."

Among the concepts that we felt were encompassed in the term "professional" were some of the following--and they will be familiar to you: internalization of ethical code and value system; possession of a body of knowledge which can be defined; acquisition of certain specific skills for the provision of service; a certain degree of altruism, or at least a stance in which self-interest is not a dominant factor; the ability to use oneself consciously and to make conscious use of a diagnostic and problem-solving procedure; sanction of the community as a whole; and the ability to exercise judgment and to work with a degree of independence.

Our group, after long discussion, came to the <u>unanimous</u> agreement that it ought to be possible in case work, group work, and community organization for a direct practitioner to perform at a beginning professional level after completing an undergraduate program which would include a major in social work knowledge and methods. As we dreamt of our utopia, we then were able to advance a new view of content and purpose for both the Master's program and the Doctoral program. When we reported back to others involved in social work education, we were rudely awakened from our dreams and became aware of the large investment, both historical and emotional,

that has been made by many to the professionalization of social work and to the development of institutions based on the premise that professional must be equated with graduate education. I believe the issue will not die. It must be dealt with again and, while our particular point of view may not be that of the majority of the field, it seems that at the very least we ought to dust off Werner Boehm's curriculum study volumes and read them again. For, while Boehm and his associates may have been too early for the stage of development of social work education in 1959, we are reaching the point where it may be almost too late for us to capture the essential wisdom of these recommendations.

I am not suggesting that standards be lowered. On the contrary. It seems to me that we must make rigorous demands of students at all levels of our educational system. I am arguing for differentiation and for clarity of objectives.

Let us now return to the contribution of the volunteer to the manpower problem in our field and to the potential that such individuals represent for increasing the permanent cadre of social workers. No program has electrified the imagination of the young generation of Americans as did the Peace Corps when President Kennedy first announced its formation. A generation that a year or two earlier had been described as apathetic, conservative, and insulated suddenly seemed galvanized, and thousands of young Americans began to volunteer for service overseas. By 1970, some 50,000 will have graduated from the Peace Corps and already large numbers of former Peace Corps volunteers have assumed positions of

leadership in Government, in community action programs, and even in the extension services of universities. Most have not participated in an educational program in the helping professions. Many had undergraduate training in fields totally unrelated to their experience in the Peace Corps. Whether they were teaching in Nairobi, or doing community development work among the villages of Peru, these experiences seem to have prepared them well for the positions which they now hold. At least, it is my impression that they are highly regarded and highly valued.

The success of the Peace Corps naturally suggested to Washington policy makers that an idea seen as worthwile for overseas activities could also be applied to the problems at home. It was not until the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was passed that Congress accepted the suggestion and ultimately created VISTA as a domestic counterpart of the Peace Corps. Today, more than 3,200 Volunteers are serving and there are VISTA Volunteers in every State, with the exception of Mississippi.

The VISTA program is far more akin to the traditional interests and concerns of the social work profession than the Peace Corps. Volunteers are assigned, after a 6-week period of training, to local sponsors who then direct their work in the poverty communities of America. Many have been trained at social work institutions, such as the Columbia University School of Social Work, the University of Maryland, and Hull House. Many are assigned to projects in the field that are directed by social workers and work in social work institutions: public welfare departments, settlement houses, homes

for maladjusted and delinquent children, community centers, family agencies, etc. Others are assigned to host agencies for social work practice: juvenile courts, mental hospitals, boards of education, prisons, etc. Still others are doing community organization in programs established with OEO funds on outlying posts where no professional social worker has ever set foot: Indian reservations, hollows of Appalachia, Eskimo villages in Alaska, and primitive rural hamlets in New Mexico, the Virgin Islands, and the Islands of Hawaii.

The degree of supervision available to them varies considerably. I think it is fair to say that as a result of the VISTA experience we have rediscovered a need which schools of social work have yet to meet--the provision to graduate students of adequate skills for the supervision and training of sub-professionals.

There are very few agencies where VISTA Volunteers are provided with adequate and carefully structured supervision designed to maximize their effectiveness. On the frontiers where no supervision is available, other factors come into play to help compensate for the lack of structure. I will mention only two such factors--the high visibility of the Volunteer, which forces him "to do something" because every pair of eyes in the reservation or the hollow is riveted on him; and the paucity of community services, which often means that no matter what he attempts to create, it is new and desperately needed in that community.

It is not easy to describe the VISTA Volunteer's job. Assignments differ greatly from location to location. The ideal VISTA Volunteer is the one who is able to develop a multi-layered sandwich of tasks in which he works with various elements of the community through the day and evening. Because most Volunteers live among those they seek to serve, they have an almost unique opportunity to see first hand the complex problems of the poor and to provide crisis assistance at the times when most social agencies are closed for the evening or for the weekend and holidays.

While VISTA has yet to develop a systematic and effective method for obtaining accurate information on the activities of Volunteers throughout the country, impressive data already are available.

I wish there were time to present a whole series of case illustrations describing the work of specific VISTA Volunteers with the Navajos in Arizona, for instance. Or the Volunteers who accompanied groups of migrant families in what we called "Operation Upstream." I suspect that these Volunteers, who went from Florida to New Jersey, know more about the plight of the migrant, as well as the complexity of the power structure that keeps the migrant in place, than most of the students whom we have graduated in the past year. Hundreds of VISTA Volunteers have been assigned to work in urban slum neighborhoods under the sponsorship of settlement houses and community action programs. And I only mention the dramatic story of the Volunteers who work in Alaska's isolated areas reached only by bush plane and their involvement in pioneering community development activities.

Many VISTA assignments provide the sort of field experience which ought to be recognized and given credit by our undergraduate schools. It seems clear that recognition by our colleges and universities of the essential value of VISTA service should encourage VISTA Volunteers to continue their college education in social welfare departments or programs.

I believe it is desirable to try to integrate the VISTA service experience of selected Volunteers with professional graduate education under the sponsorship of graduate schools of social work. I have tried to present such a proposal in some detail and am optimistic about the adoption of such plans by a number of schools of social work. Similar programs can be devised and proposed to integrate undergraduate education with VISTA service and would be given careful consideration by the directors of this program.

I do not mean to suggest that VISTA today is composed of a group of supermen. There are VISTA Volunteers who do not perform well and who are still too pre-occupied with their own individual developmental tasks to be effective in service of others. Hopefully, as both selection and training procedures in VISTA are improved, this number will be reduced. There are others in VISTA who will not have a long-range commitment to the helping professions, but for whom VISTA service represents a respite from family or university difficulties. What is impressive is that for many their VISTA service is the first step toward a life-long professional commitment to social work.

The first 225 Volunteers who completed their service were asked to assess their experience: 75 percent said that their plans for the future had been influenced by their VISTA service; 56 percent indicated that they had been encouraged by their experience in VISTA to consider entering a helping profession; an additional 22 percent already had committed themselves to a helping profession before they entered VISTA service. As part of another study not yet released, the first 3,000 Volunteers were asked why they decided to join VISTA. Nearly 31 percent rated as "very important" the goal, "To take a step toward social service work as a career"; and another 27 percent said that this had been part of their motivation.

The Volunteer Information Service of VISTA has developed procedures for maintaining contact with Volunteers who complete their service. Some of the early data, based on information received from 1,500 Volunteers who have served for a year, show that one out of every three VISTA Volunteers is choosing to remain in VISTA for further service, usually a second full year, but at least several months beyond the original one-year commitment. Of those leaving VISTA after a year, 57 percent are returning to school, and 32 percent are accepting employment in a helping occupation, including local war on poverty activities.

Many of you already know of VISTA Volunteers who have entered graduate schools of social work and of the many others who have enrolled in undergraduate departments.

A number of studies now being conducted reveal that the Volunteers developed rather quickly a sophisticated and mature view of the complexity of poverty. When asked during training how long they believed it would take to eliminate poverty as a serious social problem in the United States, less than 6 percent of the 3,000 Volunteers thought the problem could be solved within the next 10 years. Nearly 40 percent thought it would take more than 10 years, and a similar number said it was not possible to eliminate poverty in the foreseeable future.

I mention this because there is a tendency for us to assume that young persons who join the war on poverty approach the problem with a naivete--the simple answers of true believers or an anti-establishment dogma. It is impressive, therefore, that the Columbia University School of Social Work found that of 87 Volunteers who were trained at that School, most of them had developed within 4 months a very positive view of the professional social workers with whom they worked and the agencies to which they were assigned. For instance, nearly 65 percent of those Volunteers rated their agencies as "very sympathetic to clients," and only 8.1 percent thought that the agencies were indifferent to clients. They tended to view their sponsoring system as being somewhat bureaucratic, but nearly 50 percent believed that the agency for whom they worked was open to new ideas and again only 8 percent thought that the agency was not at all open to new ideas. The same study found 61 percent declaring as false the statement that "The professional staff sometimes seems to have less enthusiasm and dedication than the

Volunteers," and nearly 82 percent declared as false the statement "There is too much emphasis on professionalism in this agency."

All of my extensive contacts with Volunteers have impressed me with the ability of these persons to overcome the frustration that sets in rather early as they discover that their contribution to the problems of poverty will be relatively small and that change is not easy to achieve. Despite this insight, 92 percent of an initial group of 225 who ended their service said that they would join VISTA again if they had to do it over again, and 80 percent would recommend VISTA service to their friends.

There is every indication that VISTA will expand. If a National Service Corps is established, we will have a new instrument of national policy which will create the sort of interest in our profession that may help us to cope more successfully with the manpower shortages described in the early part of this paper. But we will also have a difficult problem with which to cope. I am convinced that we can attract thousands of VISTA Volunteers, as well as graduates of the Peace Corps, the Teachers Corps, and other volunteer programs, provided that we offer appropriate programs of education and reduce the repetitiveness of our offerings and if we avoid the assumption that they approach social work issues as novices.

To put it simply, we must begin "where they are," and many who have gone through VISTA service will begin their studies at a fairly advanced level. They will have considerable first-hand experience with the problems of poverty and the art of helping and,

if they join our profession, they will expect us, who are committed to education for the profession, to help them develop new effectiveness and greater insights. They almost certainly will be impatient with professional jargon and a program of education that seems to them like an old movie on the late-late show.

The VISTA Volunteer, then, represents a new sub-professional on our scene. He is one whose contribution needs to be recognized by our profession, whether he decides to move up the ladder of professional social work education or not. He can be encouraged to make a life-long commitment to our mission, if approached with sufficient sensitivity and imagination.

FOOTNOTES

1/ Eli Ginzberg, "Manpower in a Service Economy," Department of Labor and Department of Health Education, and Welfare, Training Health Service Workers: The Critical Challenge, Proceedings of the Department of Labor-Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Conference on Job Development and Training for Workers in Health Services, Washington, D.C.; February 14-17, 1966 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), pp. 16-20.

2/ See Daniel Thursz, Volunteer Group Advisors in a National Social Group Work Agency, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1960), 400 pp.

Daniel Thursz, "The Volunteer in Social Group Work," Journal of Jewish Communal Service, Winter 1959, pp. 210-218.

Daniel Thursz, "The Volunteer: Past Relic or Future Asset?" Rehabilitation Record, January-February 1963.

3/ Marvin J. Feldman, Making Education Relevant, (New York: The Ford Foundation, 1966), p.1.

4/ Ibid.

5/ University of Oregon, Mimeographed Prospectus, in author's possession.

6/ Purdue University, Announcement, in author's possession.

7/ Ibid.

NOTE: The data on VISTA Volunteers were obtained from studies conducted under the auspices of the Office of Research, Planning, and Evaluation of VISTA, whose activities are under the general supervision of the author. A number of these studies are now available for distribution.